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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to connect some of the main themes that emerged from the papers presented at the 1999 International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy. It first addresses the need for links between policymakers and practitioners, the rationale for policy interest in career development services, and the way in which this rationale is being strengthened by the current transformations in work and career. It then explores the potential roles for public policy in relation to career development services and ways in which the career development sector can influence the policy-making process. It discusses a range of policy issues related to making career development services available to all people throughout their lives. This includes the nature of such services, where they will be located, and who should pay for them. It concludes with a review of the need for stronger structures and processes to bring together career development practitioners with policymakers and other stakeholders to address tasks of common concern, at both the national and international levels. (Contains 18 references.) (JDM)

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Synthesis

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21. SYNTHESIS

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This chapter aims to pull together some of the main strands that emerged from the papers in this volume and from the discussions at the Symposium. It draws substantially from the event, but also represents a personal commentary on the matters discussed. It first addresses the need for links between policy makers and practitioners, the rationale for policy interest in career development services, and the way in which this rationale is being strengthened by the current transformations in work and career. It then explores the potential roles of public policy in relation to career development services and ways in which the career development sector can influence the policy-making process. Next, it discusses a range of policy issues related to making career development services available to all, throughout their life. These include the nature of such services, where they are to be located and who is to pay for them. Finally, it reviews the need for stronger structures and processes to bring together career development practitioners with policy makers and other stakeholders, to address tasks of common concern, at both national and international levels.

Links between Policy Makers and Practitioners

Until now, remarkably little attention has been paid to policy issues in the career development field. With rare exceptions (e.g., Pryor and Watts, 1991; Watts, 1996), there has been no tradition of policy studies in the professional literature. Little attention is paid to policy matters in the training of counsellors and other career development professionals.

Yet the availability of career development services, and their nature, are strongly dependent on public policy. Governments, whether at the national, regional or local level, fund most such services, either directly or indirectly. The nature of such funding imposes constraints on the kinds of services offered and to whom they are made available. If the career development profession is to extend and develop its services, it needs to strengthen its relationship with policy makers. Conversely, policy makers who see career development services as a significant policy instrument need the support and understanding of practitioners to achieve their goals. If policy decisions are made without adequate consultation, they are unlikely to be implemented effectively. (See Chapter 18, the country paper from Spain.) Accordingly, stronger links are needed between policy makers and practitioners. Policy makers, including both politicians and their civil service advisers, need to develop a deeper understanding of the nature of career development work. Practitioners need to develop a deeper

understanding of the ways in which policy is developed and implemented. Both sides need to take responsibility for initiating and sustaining this dialogue.

Rationale

The key rationale for policy interest in career development services is that they represent a public good as well as a private good. They usually are of value to the individuals to whom they are addressed. But, they also yield benefits to the wider society.

These benefits can be divided into three main categories. The first is *economic efficiency* in the allocation and use of human resources. It is argued, for example, that career development services can support the individual decisions through which the labour market operates, reduce some of its market failures and support reforms designed to improve its normal functioning (Killeen et al. 1992). It is also argued that such services are an important mechanism for linking learners to education and training programs that meet their needs and inspire their motivations, reducing drop-out rates and improving learning. Beyond this, it is argued that they link education and training systems to the labour market, optimizing the economic yield from governments' substantial investment in these systems. A major stimulus to the growth of school counselling in the United States was the Soviet Union's launch of Sputnik I and the recognition of the need to produce more outstanding scientists and technologists (Herr and Cramer, 1972). In the United Kingdom, a significant influence on policy was the link established by the Confederation of British Industry (1989) between career guidance and the "skills revolution" required to achieve international economic competitiveness.

The second benefit of career development services from a policy perspective is in fostering *social equity* in access to educational and vocational opportunities. Career development services can perform a valuable role in raising the aspirations of individuals experiencing disadvantage, whether as a result of gender, ethnicity, social-class background or disabilities. They can make such individuals aware of opportunities and support them in securing access to these opportunities. They can also reduce social exclusion, by helping young people avoid such exclusion and supporting those currently excluded to gain access to education/training and the labour market.

The third benefit concerns community and environmental *sustainability*. It is suggested, for example, that career development services should take into account the concept of "green guidance": creating awareness of the environmental impact of vocational choices, with their effects measured by an economic yardstick *and* by ethical accounting. (See Chapter 11, the country paper for Denmark and Chapter 14, the country paper for Germany.) It is also suggested that, particularly in economies which are

not wage economies, career development services should encourage individuals to relate their choices to the capacity and sustainability of communities (Bezanson, 1999a, 1999b).

Within democratic societies, the balance between these sought benefits varies among political parties. Right-wing parties tend to attach more weight to economic efficiency, left-wing parties to social equity, green parties to sustainability. Policies reflect these differences. Savickas (this publication) quotes Considine's (1994) statement that policy represents, through the commitment of funding, an expression and clarification of public values and intentions. This inevitably produces some destabilization when governments change. (See Chapter 20, the country paper for the United States.) On the other hand, the fact that career development services can be positioned in relation to a wide variety of political agendas should make it possible to maintain a fair degree of continuity if those involved in influencing policy are sufficiently adroit.

Maintaining such continuity is arguably easier if a clear account is taken of the distinctive nature of career development services as policy instruments. This is because the services, viewed in policy terms, work *through* individuals rather than *on* them. In this sense, they are "soft" rather than "hard" policy interventions. At the heart of such interventions is the notion of the "active individual" — that individuals should be encouraged to participate in determining their role within, and their contribution to, the society of which they are part. In framing the way in which individuals are encouraged to address societal needs, the balance between economic efficiency, societal equity and community/environmental sustainability can vary. But if, in the end, the needs and wishes of individuals are given primacy, this provides a base for maintaining the continuity of such services.

The primacy of the individual's interests is commonly a core principle in codes of practice for career development services. There are practical as well as ethical reasons for this, not the least of which is that such services can only serve the public good if they retain the confidence and trust of the individuals with whom they are working. This implies a self-denying ordinance on the part of policy makers, who may justify public support for the services on the grounds that they serve public purposes but, ultimately, have to abnegate these purposes as the operating principle on which the practices of the service should be based. It is, in principle, a classic case of Adam Smith's (1776) famous dictum that individuals encouraged to pursue their own interests are led by an "invisible hand" to promote an end which is not part of their intention — the public interest — and to do so more effectually than when they intend to promote it. Perhaps, career development services represent Smith's "invisible hand" made flesh.

The above view of the provision of career development services presents a problem in relation to the policy significance likely to be attached to it.

Policy makers have tended to be interested in *structural* solutions to problems. Within this mind set, career development services tend to be viewed not as a direct *instrument* of policy, but more as a *lubricant* of such structural solutions. This may explain why such services may be "invisible" in the eyes of some decision makers. (See Chapter 12, the country paper from Finland.) This subordinate "lubricant" role is, however, important, and needs to be recognized as such.

In addition, there is increasing questioning of the conventional way in which policy seeks to answer problems solely through structures and systems, in the form of government interventions administered by government bureaucracies. Instead, governments are increasingly seeking to operate through enabling *processes*: working with, and seeking to influence, the enterprise and energies of many other people and organizations. The concern is to ensure public interests are met, where possible, through private actions, but influencing these actions so they collectively meet the long-term interests of all, rather than the short-term interests of the few (e.g., Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). Career development services would seem to fit well into this changed mind set. It potentially accords such services much greater significance in their own right.

Transformations in Work and Career

The argument for policy makers to pay more attention to career development services as "soft" policy interventions is linked to the transformations taking place in work and career. There seemed at the Symposium to be a strong consensus that the broad trend toward more flexible, self-managed careers is common to most advanced economies. The dominant model of career is no longer progression up an ordered hierarchy within an organization or occupation. Rather, career describes the individual's lifelong development in learning and in work. This model is, in principle, open to all. It means career development services are now concerned to help individuals not to *choose* careers, but to *construct* them. Individuals now have to develop their own "working identity connected to the dynamic of the work order" (see Chapter 16, the country paper from the Netherlands), exploring and constructing their self "as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change" (see Chapter 12, the country paper from Finland; Giddens, 1994).

These transformations have massive implications for individuals, employers, communities and public policy. Welfare systems, financial-security systems (including pensions and mortgages), and education and training systems have all been built around the industrial model of career, based on secure male employment and standardized life cycles. All now need to be recast (Bayliss, 1998a; Watts, in press). A major aspect of this recasting is reviewing the role of career development services. Many individuals will need, and want, support at strategic points in managing

their career development, which includes sustaining their employability through lifelong learning. Such support needs to be available to all, as and when required, throughout life. A substantial expansion of this support is needed, along with innovation in developing new forms of support (including exploiting the role of information and communication technologies). This is now a high-priority issue for public policy.

Policy Roles

The potential roles of public policy in relation to career development services fall into four categories: legislation, remuneration, exhortation and regulation.

Legislation

The role played by legislation varies among countries. In some countries, specific legislation is the essential precondition for action, while in others, legislation plays a more limited role. In the former case, the existence of legislation does not necessarily mandate action. In Argentina, for example, a law in which all the main aspects of guidance were considered was not promoted for lack of funds. (See Chapter 7, the country paper from Argentina.) Legislation relating to career development services is often concerned with a particular subset of such services, and commonly integrates consideration of these services with broader aspects of education/training or employment policy. Denmark appears to be the only country with specific legislation covering all career development activities, regardless of institutional setting. (See Chapter 11, the country paper from Denmark.)

Remuneration

The remuneration role may take a variety of forms. Some funding is provided directly from government to services; other is provided indirectly as, for example, where educational institutions are funded by government and are encouraged to devote some of this funding to the provision of career development services. Such *systemic funding* needs to be distinguished from *initiative funding*, which is usually provided on a short-term basis, seeking to encourage innovation and change.

Exhortation

Whatever its funding role, governments may seek to influence the nature of career development provision through exhortation. Such influence can be exerted in a number of ways, ranging from ministers' speeches to formal guidelines. It may include creating principled visions that command imagination and effort, and facilitating collaboration and partnership to implement such visions. Relatively small sums of initiative funding can often act as powerful incentives in this respect.

Regulation

In some cases, governments may seek to intervene more strongly, through regulation. This is particularly likely where government is directly responsible for funding and can exert financial sanctions for non-compliance. Government may also, however, seek to regulate services funded indirectly — through inspection procedures, for instance. It can further, in principle, seek to regulate services provided on a market basis, by requiring licences to offer such services. Alternatively, government may be willing to delegate responsibility for this regulation to the career development sector itself.

The balance between these roles is likely to vary considerably among countries. There are also differences in the relative extent to which the roles are influential at national, regional or local levels. In several large countries — Australia, Canada and the United States, for example — national governments have limited powers in relation to the field of education, where many career development services are located. Policies at the state/provincial level tend, therefore, to be more significant. There is also a strong case for arguing that if coherent career development provision is to be developed on a lifelong basis, there needs to be strategies at the local level for bringing partners together and co-ordinating their efforts (Watts et al., 1997).

At the same time, there is a need to look at the role of international policies. The European Commission, for instance, has had a significant impact on career development programs in such countries as Ireland. (See Chapter 15, the country paper from Ireland.) There is a particularly strong case for developing international policies in relation to services that cross national boundaries — the quality of Web sites, for example.

One major difficulty with policy in the career development field is that it tends to cross administrative boundaries. In particular, it crosscuts education policy, which tends to operate within a social tradition, and labour-market policy, which tends to operate within an economic tradition. Where these two areas are closely harmonized, policy related to career development is likely to be given more significant attention and to take a more coherent form. Where they are clearly separated, such policy is likely either to be marginalized or to be incorporated in separate ways within the two distinct traditions. This can affect career development services, which tend then to become strongly segmented within the different sectors in which they operate.

An important question is whether it is better for policy to relate specifically to career development services per se, or to address them within wider educational, social and labour-market policies. Certainly where such services have a clearly important role to play in relation to structural reforms, for example, the Danish job-and-training rotation scheme — this

can add significant "clout." (See Chapter 11, the country paper from Denmark.) On the other hand, such policies tend to segment services. It may be that supports for individual career development will be accorded sufficient importance to merit policy consideration in their own right.

Influencing the Policy-Making Process

If career development services are to be given stronger recognition by policy makers, the career development sector needs to give more attention to ways of influencing the policy-making process. As part of this, more evidence is needed on the economic and social benefits of such services. These might include cost-benefit analyses covering, for instance, impact on unemployment costs and on non-completion rates in post-compulsory education and training. Such evidence needs also to be marshalled and presented in ways that make it readily accessible to policy makers. U.K. examples include the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) briefings on *Economic Benefits of Careers Guidance, Social Benefits of Career Guidance* and *Careers Work and School Effectiveness.*

Relying solely on this kind of evidence is, however, inadequate. It assumes that policy making is a rational process, whereas in practice — as emphasized by policy makers at the Symposium — it is "messy and dirty," strongly influenced by balancing the interests of different lobbies, and "a lot happens by accident." Certainly, the evidence needs to be there, otherwise its absence will be used by opponents to undermine the case. The evidence is necessary, but not sufficient.

Attention needs to be paid, in particular, to harnessing the support of interest groups. It was noted at the Symposium that in Ireland in the 1980s, when a political decision was made to reduce funding for guidance services in schools, a concerted effort was targeted at parents to highlight the value of guidance for their children. It was also pointed out that in the United States, major changes in higher education have taken place as a result of self-interest advocacy expressed by students. In the United Kingdom, the support for careers education and guidance programs provided by the Confederation of British Industry (1989) has been influential. Trade unions, too, are becoming more interested in advocacy for career development services (Ford and Watts, 1997). The career development profession is likely to be more effective in the policy-making process if it can activate the interest and "voice" of these and other stakeholder groups. If it relies solely on its own advocacy, this can too easily be dismissed as self-interest.

In more concrete terms, five pieces of advice were offered by policy makers to career development professionals in the course of the consultation. One was "don't underestimate the press." Politicians and their advisers regularly scan the newspapers and it is important that they see evidence there of public interest in career development issues. The second was "the phone has

to ring." There needs to be active pressure, preferably from individuals with some political influence. The third was "recognize the importance of personal experience." Policy makers are often strongly influenced by their own experience of career development services or those of their children. The fourth was "provide the sound bytes." Career development professionals need to translate their complex professional concepts into language policy makers can absorb and use, without distorting the underlying message. Finally, it was noted that counsellors, with their strong listening and communication skills, ought to be well equipped to be effective lobbyists in support of their work. They need to overcome their understandable and worthy, but misguided, ethical reluctance to use their skills for political, as well as helping, purposes.

Policy Issues

If career development services are to be available to all throughout life, careful consideration needs to be given to the nature of such services, where they are to be located, and who is to pay for them. Some services are likely to be education based, some employment based and some community based. Some will be in the public sector, some in the voluntary sector and some in the private sector. Some will be professional career development services, some will be part of wider service provision, some will be self-managed and some will be informal in nature. The balance and relationship between these various forms of career development support are likely to vary among countries.

It seems clear, however, that the traditional model of publicly funded professional services based within formal bureaucratic systems is not likely to be a sufficient model for the future. In Germany, the monopoly of career development services previously held by the Federal Labour Exchange Office has been broken, and new private and voluntary agencies are beginning to emerge, applying different approaches. (See Chapter 14, the country paper from Germany.) In France, innovative work with young people at risk has been entrusted not to the highly qualified guidance professionals within the education system, but to staff with limited training. Paradoxically, this means less-trained staff members have much more demanding tasks to perform. (See Chapter 13, the country paper from France.) There is a risk that if formal services are unable to adapt to the new challenges posed by flexible labour markets and the like, such services will increasingly be marginalized. On the other hand, if the resources and expertise available within these services can be applied in more flexible ways and within more diversified models of delivery, the services could make a strong continuing contribution to enhancing the quality of such delivery across the board.

The need for more diversified delivery models is evident in many countries. More account needs to be taken of where individuals actually go for help in

relation to their career development — the role of public libraries, for example. Programs designed to provide access to career development services for disadvantaged communities are often most successful when they are located in community centres and include active outreach strategies and the use of "barefoot counsellors" (i.e., indigenous lay individuals). Such strategies should not, however, be viewed as negating the need for clear professional standards. To cover the wide range of provision they should encompass, these standards need to be broad and flexible, with some recognition of hierarchy (distinguishing basic from more advanced standards) but with at least as strong attention to diversity (acknowledging the appropriateness of different standards for different levels of delivery and for different settings).

An important issue for governments is what career development services they should seek to provide themselves, and what their role should be in relation to services provided by others. Some governments are seeking to establish a distinction between information and guidance in these respects. In New Zealand, for example, current policy is based on government ownership in the provision of career information, but with the establishment of a contestable market (i.e., multi-provider competition) for career guidance. (See Chapter 17, the country paper from New Zealand.) In the United Kingdom, the priority for public funding of adult guidance is the provision of a basic information and advice service; other services may need to be offered on a fee-paying basis. (See Chapter 19, the country paper from the United Kingdom.)

In relation to schools, three countries — the Netherlands, New Zealand and the United Kingdom — have adopted broadly similar approaches which have involved mandating career education within the curriculum, and then adopting different kinds of quasi-market mechanisms in relation to school use of external guidance services. In the Netherlands, this has included making funding available for schools to spend, initially with external services but, from 2000 on, as they wish. (See Chapter 16, the country paper from the Netherlands.) In New Zealand, it has involved some centrally funded services from Careers Services (a government agency) but also school-managed funding for additional services which can be purchased on a contestable basis from Careers Services or from private providers. (See Chapter 17, the country paper from New Zealand.) In the United Kingdom, support is provided through central government contracts with local careers services which are now separate legal entities. (See Chapter 19, the country paper from the United Kingdom.) It would be useful to conduct a transnational study of the relative effectiveness of such quasi-market approaches, in comparison with alternative models of service delivery.

Within education and training, career development services tend to be free to the end user, or incorporated in fees for the learning program as a whole. For other adults, however, there are issues about who should pay for such

services. In most countries, governments have been reluctant to commit themselves to making career development services freely available to all individuals, on the grounds that this would involve writing an open cheque. Where services have been made available, they have tended to be targeted at particular groups — notably the unemployed — or to be given minimal publicity in order to restrict demand. If, however, policy makers decide it is in the public interest for individuals to use career development services, they will want to find a means of expanding such services without substantial budget increases.

This opens up the question of whether such services should be paid for, at least in part, by individuals or employers. In France, all employees are entitled to a skills review funded by their employer. The utilization of this entitlement has been low, because employees fear that seeking such a review may be interpreted by their employer as a sign of potential disloyalty. (See Chapter 13, the country paper from France.) In the United Kingdom and the United States, it seems that individuals are prepared to pay for career counselling, but, in general, only at levels which cover marginal costs rather than full costs: this does not enable a market to develop in which demand leads to expansion of supply. The advent in the United Kingdom of "individual learning accounts" as a mechanism for co-investment in learning (including guidance) shared by individuals, employers and the state, could provide a way of breaking out of this marginal-costs barrier to expansion, enabling the guidance to be paid for on a full-cost basis by getting employers and the state to supplement what individuals are prepared to pay (Watts, 1999).

If career development services are to be actively promoted to adults, more attention is needed to marketing these services. Evidence from recent market research in the United Kingdom suggests that many adults have little understanding of what guidance services can offer them and, not infrequently, have negative perceptions of such services based on bad memories of what was offered to them at school (Wilson and Jackson, 1998). Professional jargon can be an impediment here: simple descriptions are needed of career development that will be understood by consumers and by policy makers alike. More market research is needed on consumer perceptions and needs, along with clearer "branding" of career development services to communicate their existence and to enable customers to know what to expect from them. Such steps are likely also to have an impact on policy makers, who tend to be responsive to public interest and pressure. The move from a provider-driven to a consumer-driven culture will probably alter the nature of career development delivery in significant respects. Responses to consumer demand will continue to need to be supplemented by proactive strategies designed to make such services available to poor and disadvantaged communities.

It is important that career development services be available on a lifelong basis (including provision for the "third age"). The role of schools needs to be recast in relation to this model. Career education programs in schools should lay the foundations for lifelong career development. The career management skills developed by such programs should include how to access and use support from career development services in the future. There is concern in several countries that too much career education provision in schools is of poor quality, delivered by teachers inadequately trained for such work and with inadequate support in the form of quality standards, inspection mechanisms and performance measures. Such provision too often lead to negative impressions of career development services that dissuade adults from using them. Improvements in quality are crucial if lifelong career development is now to receive the attention it needs. In due course, more radical changes are likely to be needed in the structure and nature of schools in response to transformations in the world of work and related social changes (Bayliss, 1998b).

A final important issue relating to the future of career development services is the role of information and communication technologies (ICT). Here too, there is widespread concern about the quality of some of the services available, about the risk that ICT puts those who do not have the opportunity or the skills to access these services at a disadvantage and about the danger that policy makers will regard the availability of Web sites and computerized systems as a reason for reducing investment in services offering direct interaction with trained professionals.

Nonetheless, it is clear that ICT offers major opportunities for redesigning career development services, and improving their quality and accessibility. It is also likely to open up the market in relation to such services, as it has in such fields as banking. The career development sector needs to work with the ICT potential, seeking to channel it rather than resist it.

Structures and Processes

If these and related issues are to be addressed, structures and processes are needed which will regularly bring together career development practitioners (from all relevant sectors) with policy makers and other stakeholder interests (employers, unions, education and training organizations, community organizations, consumer groups) to address common concerns. These include developing a common language and understanding, strategic planning, developing and implementing quality standards and accountability/performance measures, both for practitioner competence and for organizational delivery, fostering partnership and coherence, promoting public understanding of the nature and significance of career development programs and services, and ensuring that all career development provision is addressed to meeting the needs of individuals.

The nature of these structures and processes will vary among countries. Already, there are a number of examples. In Denmark, the National Council for Educational and Vocational Guidance (RUE) brings together national education and training authorities, the social partners, women's organizations and career counsellors' professional associations, with a statutory responsibility for co-ordinating the field of career development. (See Chapter 11, the country paper from Denmark.) In the United Kingdom, the independent National Advisory Council for Careers and Educational Guidance brings together the guidance professional associations and key stakeholder groups, with government observers. In Canada, a series of leadership forums convened by the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Foundation agreed that a "leadership council" was needed to build bridges between career development practitioners and those involved in public policy. (See Chapter 9, the country paper from Canada.)

Elsewhere, organizations with narrower remits have been able to play valuable co-ordinating roles. In Ireland, the National Centre for Guidance in Education was set up by the government to improve guidance provision in education and has provided a focal point for innovation in the field. (See Chapter 15, the country paper from Ireland). In the Netherlands, the National Centre for Career Issues (LDC) was set up by the government to provide support to, and promote innovation in, guidance services in all sectors. In the United States, the National Occupational Information Co-ordinating Committee (NOICC) and the State Occupational Information Co-ordinating Committees (SOICCs) were established to co-ordinate the delivery of career and labour-market information, but have developed wider roles. These have included developing national career development guidelines identifying the career development competencies to be achieved at all education levels. (See Chapter 20, the country paper from the United States.) Government funding for the NOICC is now coming to an end, leaving a vacuum which will need to be filled if such co-ordinating work is to be sustained and developed further.

The need for such co-ordinating bodies is also evident in several countries where they do not exist currently. In addition, since the issue of career development is now of global significance, and is linked to the global movement of people and resources, stronger structures and processes are needed at the international level. This will make it possible to share experience and good practice relating to policy, innovation, research and career development practice: the adaptation of the U.S. National Career Development Guidelines in Canada and Japan provides an existing example of what can be achieved. (See Chapter 20, the country paper from the United States.) It will also make it possible to harness the support of international organizations such as the European Commission, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and to

support equality of opportunity across nations. The International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) potentially provides a valuable focus for such development, but its work needs to be extended to develop a stronger policy dimension, with enhanced links with policy makers at national and international levels. The consultation recorded in this volume has been a promising first step to developing the required structures and processes.

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Endnote

[1] These works are all available from the National Institute for Careers Guidance and Counselling, Sheraton House, Castle Park, Cambridge CB3 0AX, England.